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"AIDA" AND ITS AUTHOR.¹

BY DR. EDWARD HANSLICK.

Aida is a remarkable, genuinely artistic, and, compared with Verdi's previous operas, a very surprising production. A careful perusal of the score reveals many musical beauties, which pass unnoticed at the first time of hearing the opera. The first impression is indeed favorable, and, according to the individuality of the hearer, more or less affecting; yet there is a mixture of displeasing and oppressive sensations. While we are charmed by certain delightful melodies, we are also pressed down as with an invisible hand by the fatal and gloomy character of the material and music. Pervading the entire music there is something unspeakably melancholy; something like the subdued disconsolateness of Lenau's poetry. Then, too, the argument is unmercifully tragic. *Aida*, a prisoner, is in love with her captor. He returns her love, but is a victim to the fatal passion of the king's daughter, who finally succeeds in marrying him, knowing that his heart belongs to another. Everything, even from the beginning, sinks into ruin—a ruin, against which no successful effort from either side can be made. The poet fails to provide cheering lights or a friendly change of colors. Slowly and oppressively the horrible end of being buried alive is neared. The composer follows the subject with the truest devotion. He scorns any frivolous effect, and thus, by the powerful means of his music, greatly increases the bitter anguish of the poetry. True, Amneris is seen at first with happy nuptial musings; subsequently *Aida* and *Rhadames* for a moment contemplate flight and future happiness, but in neither instance is there a comforting expectation. So true is the music that, by listening to it, whatever consoling hopes may have arisen are at once dispelled. Even among these few green oases the coming disaster murmurs like a hidden fountain.

Completely filled with the fundamental character of the tragedy, Verdi does here, instinctively and unknowingly, what Gluck has done intentionally in the *Iphigénie*: the conscious-stricken Orest talks of peace returning to his soul, but the turbulent accords whisper, "He lies!" Even the festival songs in *Aida* are permeated with tones of complaint. The triumphal march has indeed splendor, but no cheerfulness. Composer, as well as poet, has neglected too much the effects of contrast. Slow tempi and binary rhythms predominate in a striking degree. The first two acts have no triple measure, which first appears in the third act in two short *andante* passages, sung

¹ Translated for the Voice, (Albany, N. Y.)

by *Aida*, and finally in the last act, in the duet between Amneris and Rhadames.

The almost unbroken elegiac treatment and the Egyptian costumes are the two chief defects which mar the effect of *Aida*, taken as a whole. The politics and religion, the oddities of dress and civilization of the ancient Egyptians are altogether too strange for us. We do not feel at ease among a lot of brown and black painted men. It may be urged that this is merely external, yet, for all, the spectator's sympathies are chilled, let the cause be the hideous idols, the colossal statues, or the various sacred beasts, which terrified even the Persians when they were conquered by the Egyptians. Think of nothing but dark-colored singers on the stage! Then, besides, the ugly, vaulting negroes and the dancing women dressed and painted in the most repulsive manner! An opera should present something of the lovely and agreeable, and no ethnological exactness can compensate for a total lack of beauty. It is also not pleasant to see continually so many priests and priestesses, and to witness nothing but Egyptian ceremonies.

Aida was composed by wish of the viceroy of Egypt, and was first performed in Cairo, in 1872. The treatment of Egyptian affairs was one of the chief conditions imposed. The subject-matter of the opera was originally written in prose by a learned Egyptian. Verdi has displayed great skill in giving his music the national coloring. In this he has been moderate and characteristic. The dances and temple songs have the peculiar, whimpering melody of the Orientals, with its predominant fourths and scanty sixths, its meagre harmony and simple, quaint orchestration. Two original Egyptian melodies are employed in the first finale: in the song of the priestesses with harp accompaniment, and in the dance melody in E-flat, performed with three flutes. A genuine master-hand is seen in the ingenious and charming handling of these two national motives.

We have, now-a-days, plenty of foreign local coloring, but Verdi excels in his sense of musical beauty by which he assigns these peculiarities to their proper, i. e., to a subordinate place. He does not present the Orient to us with photographic accuracy, but gives us an idealization through the grace and richness of our modern western European harmony. Verdi, who hitherto has shown no liking for local musical colors, but always remained Italian in his music, shows in *Aida*, for the first time, that he is also master of this foreign field. Yet, after all, the Egyptian garb in *Aida* hinders the full display of his talent. If he would use the same energy, the same creative faculty, and the same fidelity, now, in composing an opera from Roman material, and with variegated treatment, he would, without doubt, surpass *Aida* and all of his other former works.

All of *Aida's* outer, strange splendor is, however, of minor importance compared with the luxurious charm of its melodies, the dramatic force of its rhythm and the warm current of feeling which flows through the entire music. Think, for example, of *Aida's* beau-

tiful and fervent, "And, my love, must I forget it?" of Amneris's splendid theme in D-flat, "No, you will live, joined to me in love"; of the touching, revealing close of the final duet, "Farewell, O earth!" and of many other similar passages.

It is remarkable and yet just that *Aida*, the latest production of a sexagenarian who has long since reached the height of his fame, should be praised chiefly on account of the progress the author has made. In truth, there are in *Aida* a dramatic faithfulness, an industry in the technical elaboration, and, more than all, a nobleness and unity of style, which, coming from the composer of *Ernani*, are indeed surprising. The German critic, who, as a rule, is almost hostile to Italian opera, is most happily set to rights by these superior features of *Aida*. Perhaps they force him to admit that a composer who now, in old age, reaps and deserves such praise certainly could not formerly have been entirely worthless, as some harsh critics have painted him for twenty-five years past. It may be said that in *Aida* Verdi has become another person completely, that his identity is lost; but this is an error which can be made only by those who do not know his former operas. Although he did not have the desired degree of culture and development, yet Verdi possessed great dramatic talent from the start, like many other of his celebrated and uncelebrated countrymen. While Rossini, the genial buffoon, clings to the historical customs of the Italians, of composing charming melodies for their own sake, regardless of their adaptation to the subject (so that even his serious operas, with the exception of *Tell*, are only *concertante* comedy music), Verdi, who has none of Rossini's grace and humor, has seldom composed a melody which lacked passionate, dramatic force. The criticism must be made on every one of Verdi's operas (and it has been done indefatigably) that a great deal of coarseness crops out near beautiful and affecting passages; yet justice requires that we direct our attention to the great dramatic talent and fertile creation which are manifested among these very crudities.

In *Don Carlos* and in *Aida*, Verdi has displayed the same artistic scrupulousness in returning to great simplicity and quiet expression. Discarding all outward considerations for the pretensions of the singers and for popular applause, he this time follows only his best and recently matured judgment. He has not thought of transient success alone, but of "immortality," as it is flatteringly called when a work has a relatively long life. In this latest production appear the passionate eloquence and dramatic power which characterize his previous operas,—artistically interwoven, refined, in a sort of aesthetic catharsis. Nevertheless, it is fully and genuinely Verdi. An imitation of Wagner, as many critics have asserted, is out of the question. True, Verdi, like every other modern operatic composer of intelligence, is indebted to Wagner for important innovations; but in *Aida* there is not a single measure which the Italian owes to the German. If *Aida* be called Wagnerish, so must also Gounod's *Romeo*

and Ambroise Thomas's *Hamlet*, because they depart from the old models, follow the words with more accuracy, give greater prominence to the orchestra, and adopt certain instrumental effects which have become customary since the production of *Tannhäuser*. Verdi, like Gounod and Thomas, has not refused, narrow-mindedly, to profit by the modern development of music. On the contrary, he has, without injury to his individuality (which indeed has been given long since a public stamp), made use of the best, or what for him were the most available features of those dramatic reforms which, foreshadowed or initiated by Weber and Meyerbeer, have been methodically carried on by Wagner. Besides, whenever Wagner's influence is manifested in an Italian or a Frenchman, it is only the influence of his earlier style, particularly that of *Tannhäuser*, which still passes for half orthodox. Of the distinct, later phase of Wagner's dramatic music, begun in *Tristan*, continued in the *Meistersinger*, and culminated in the *Ring des Nibelungen*,—of this colloquial, declamatory song about the endless melody of an insatiable orchestra, there is not the slightest trace either in *Aida*, or in any other Italian or French opera.

The expressive melody of the singing voices predominates over everything in *Aida*; the song does not follow so much the literal words as it does the significance of the situation; wherever dramatic continuity requires it, the form is freely handled, and this, too, by preserving the harmony between the *romanza* and the duets, trios, and recitatives. Dramatic law rules in the entire composition, like an invisible church, yet its visible head from beginning to end is musical beauty. In short, it affords pleasure to see how a man of Verdi's genial talents has produced such a beautiful opera, which has for its foundation the repulsive and dissolute customs of the Egyptians.

In the village of Busseto, duchy of Parma, Italy, Guiseppe Verdi was born, Oct. 9th, 1814. The local organist gave the boy his first musical instruction, which could hardly have gone beyond the most necessary rudiments. Verdi, when nineteen years old, felt the defectiveness of his musical schooling and was eager for better opportunities, such as are, as a rule, obtainable only in large cities. His family being poor, he was enabled to carry out his plans only through the generosity of a neighbor, Barezzi, and, in 1833 he went to Milan, but was refused admittance to the conservatory. The reason for his refusal (which has been bitterly enough repented of), has never been satisfactorily explained. Fétis, in his "Musical Lexicon," is of the opinion that the director of the conservatory, Francesco Basili, one of the last strictly schooled masters of the preceding century, saw nothing in Verdi's outer appearance to indicate a successful artistic future. "It is evident," adds Fétis, "that never was the physiognomy of a composer less a revealer of talent." Aside from the fact that a person's talent is not rated by his face, it seems to me that Verdi's physiognomy, is this respect, was most unjustly judged. It is sad, immovable, yet anything but expressionless or uninteresting. When I had the

honor of forming his acquaintance in Her Majesty's Theatre London, a few years ago, his earnest, quiet (if not too amiable) manner made a favorable impression. However it may be, Verdi was not admitted to the conservatory; he was forced to be satisfied with the teachings of Lavigna, the leader of the theatre orchestra; but under this teacher's thoroughly practical guidance, and in spite of Maestro Basili, he soon realized enough from his music to buy a number of extensive and valuable estates in Busseto, where he now lives in the full employment of his good fortune.

His beautiful villa at Busseto, is known among the people as *La villa del professore Verdi*. Every peasant for miles around can direct the stranger to the charming chateau and tell whether Verdi is at home or not. Here the composer rests from his labors and triumphs. With a gun over his shoulder or a book in his hand he roams about, calling upon his numerous tenants and discussing with them the details of their work. Herr Escudier, Verdi's publisher and most enthusiastic admirer, has written a description of his country life. According to him, Verdi has as much knowledge of farming as of harmony (happy fields!) The farmers worship him and manifest their attachment in all sorts of ways. In the evening, when he and his wife walk out, the peasants assemble and welcome them with choruses from his operas. He seems to be constantly surrounded by fervent adoration. Two original types are his father-in-law and his valet. Papa Antonio can never hear of him or his music without crying, and he preserves as a sacred relic the first musical scribbles of his son-in-law. Love of music changed Servant Luigi's vocation from that of hackman. Verdi is "his god," and whoever delights in the productions of Rossini, Bellini, or Donizetti is to him "a cretin."

Verdi is at home in the literature of all nations, and is conversant with all the great political, social and scientific questions of the day. He was elected member of the Italian parliament simply as an "incomparable patriot," which seems all the more strange because he has never spoken a word in the chamber. Yet his name is not without political significance; the opposition party used it as a harmless mask in the form of an anagram. When the cry *Vivi l'Italia!* was stopped in Lombardy, Rome, Tuscany, and Naples, the people shouted *Viva Verdi!* The name of Verdi was indicated as follows:

Vittore Emanuele Rè d' Italia.

This mysterious inscription is still on the walls of many public buildings whose occupants have thought of nothing less than of Verdi and his operas.

OLE BULL.

[Translated from Aftenposten].

... Ole Borneman Bull was born in Bergen the 5th February, 1810, and was the son of Johan Storm Bull, an apothecary of Bergen, and his wife, Anna Dorteia Bull, born Geelmuyden. Just at that time Bergen held a prominent social position. It had many good old families engaged in trade, with an inheritance of culture and a lively interest in intellectual and refined pleasure, and the social life of those days stood

far above what the tradesmen's families of our time regard as the acme of convivial enjoyment. Their exuberant mirth might often break out in drinking songs, and ringing choruses, but it was in an amiable and harmless spirit, and always associated with a desire and an effort to devote their friendly gatherings to higher ends; private theatricals and musical entertainments belonged to the order of the day.

These two tastes were represented in both the Bull and Geelmuyden families, and especially was "Uncle Jens" (Geelmuyden) an ardent quartet man, at whose house Mozart's, Haydn's, and others' quartets were constantly well played. The little Ole Bull had inherited the talent, but he began in a modest way. When he was three or four years old he had to be satisfied with two chips, representing fiddle and bow, but on these he scraped indefatigably, as seated in a corner he hummed a tune. Uncle Jens thought the boy might have a little better violin, so he took out of his store a Nuremberg fiddle with "real strings," and on these the talented little fellow soon learned to coax the tunes he had heard others play.

His schooling did not amount to much, but he made progress in playing, and at seven and eight years old he enjoyed the honor of being present at Uncle Jens's to hear "the quartet."

It happened to be just his eighth birthday when he showed what he had been teaching himself in secret. The Quartet was assembled at Uncle Jens's, and the first violin, "Kammermusik" (Royal Musician) Poulsen had been drinking so much that he was not to be relied on. So Uncle Jens said in fun that Ole might play, and this he did, to the astonishment of all, so creditably, that the reward was a new violin from Uncle Jens.

Ole Bull still continued his self-instruction until 1822, when for the first time he had regular lessons from a clever Swedish violinist, Lundholm, who at that time came to settle in Bergen. He then made remarkable progress, and learned to play very difficult pieces.

At school he was an indifferent pupil, and when he came to Christiania in 1828, to pass his examination at the University, he was rejected on Latin composition—fortunately, we must add.

In the meantime, some musical occupation was found for him when Waldemar Trane, leader of the orchestra at the theatre, became so ill that it was necessary to put another in his place, and Ole Bull secured it. But now a stronger desire was aroused in him, the desire to become an artist, to come out in the world, to learn and hear and work with all his might. He must go to Spohr, who then stood first in the estimation of our musical circles.

The 19th of May, 1829, he started with very little money in his pocket, but all his artist's courage in his breast. He found Spohr, but it is easy to understand that two natures, so diametrically opposed, could find no attraction in each other. Spohr, a virtuoso and composer, strict, formal, classically severe in form, could not harmonize with the eccentric, bizarre, original Bull, and vice versa. After several fruitless attempts to accomplish something in Germany, he was obliged to return home again.

He made his next appearance as leader of the orchestra in Christiania, but in 1830 he went to Trondtjem and Bergen to give concerts, and in Bergen directed the "Harmony." By these means he earned money enough to set out on the longed-for journey to Paris.

Here his struggles began in earnest. No recommendations were of any avail, no one would help him, and we all know what it means to be living on scanty traveling funds. As a final blow, he was robbed of the last money he had, his violin, and everything except his clothes. It was diffi-

cult for him to obtain credit for his lodging, and he was exposed to annoyances of all kinds.

To this epoch in his life belongs the oft-told anecdote of how, just as he was casting longing eyes on the waters of the Seine, he was enticed into a gaming-house, where he put up his last five francs and won, but, owing to his indistinct pronunciation of the language, instead of five, he carried off a hundred francs.

His affairs were now at a standstill, when, by chance, he was heard by the Duke of Montebello in a drawing-room, where he was trying some manufacturer's violins. By the aid of the Duke's recommendation he was able to give a concert, and with the proceeds he started on a concerting tour which took him down into Italy. Here, at last, his star was to rise, and this episode deserves to be related in the words of Wergeland's Biography.

He had arrived in Bologna. Here the violinist, Beriot, and the singer, Malibran, were engaged for the season by the Philharmonic Society; but just before one of the concerts, both suddenly became "indisposed," on account of some uncertainty in regard to their salary.

This threw the director of the Philharmonic Society, Marchese di Zampieri, into the greatest perplexity. Just then, towards evening one day, the well-known singer, Madame Colbran, (afterwards married to Rossini), in passing by Casa Soldati, a low inn for soldiers, vetturini and muleteers, heard through an open window some wonderful bars of music on an instrument which she did not seem to recognize. It was Bull. In his white-washed garret in this miserable inn, to which he had been driven two weeks earlier by the faithlessness of some one who had borrowed money of him, while the whole town was only talking of Beriot, Malibran and Colbran, he had written his first important composition, his "Concerto in A-major; but, unacquainted with the rules of art necessary for its transference to paper, he was sitting by the open window playing over the airs. The singer stood listening a long time.

"It must be a violin; but a divine one. That makes up for Malibran and Beriot. Off to Zampieri."

In the evening near ten o'clock, when Bull, hungry and ill, had been in bed for a couple of hours, a knocking was heard at the door. "Cospetto di Bacco, what stairs!" It was Zampieri himself, the most musical of all Italy's nobili, renowned from Mont Cenis to Cape Spartivento. Bull must get up and improvise. He was the man for it! Leave Malibran to her migraine and goodness knows what. Not only was he dragged up, but off to the theatre at once with Zampieri, where he found a brilliant assembly, the Grand Duke of Tuscany himself, and Beriot, with his hand hypocritically bound up in a handkerchief. All were transported with Bull. He took his courage in his hands, and begged the ladies for subjects. The wife of Prince Carlo Poniatowsky gave him one from "Norma," two other ladies, one from "The Siege of Corinth," and one from "Capuletti and Montecchi." At the closing strains, he was covered with flowers by the enraptured ladies; Zampieri, Beriot, and the whole company complimented him. It was a *trouvaillie*. He was to have the assistance of the whole company at a concert of his own, if he would first give his assistance at one already announced; the society would subscribe for sixty tickets. Emilio Loup, (a Swiss) who owned a large theatre, placed it at his disposal together with the orchestra, and one private individual alone took a hundred tickets. *Ah ca ira!* Now Fortune's wheel had turned. The Fates seemed to have reeled off their black threads and begun to spin new and shining ones. He played at the Society's concert, and gave one for himself at Loup's. After the latter he was

complimented by a torch-light procession and appointed honorary member of the first class by the Philharmonic Society. *Ca ira!* This was only a beginning; it was Bull's real beginning.

From this time he went on with giant strides, giving concerts in numerous cities, until in 1835 he appeared at the opera in Paris. On this occasion a piquant feuilleton of Jules Janin effected miracles, as once before at Rachel's début at the Théâtre Français; and all the concert-halls in the country were now open to him. After marrying in Paris, Alexandrine Félicité Villemainot, to whom he had become engaged in his days of suffering, he started on his musical tours. First he visited England; afterwards, in 1837, Brussels, Hamburg, Lübeck, Schwerin, Königsberg, Riga, St. Petersburg and Moscow, and everywhere achieved a brilliant success. From Moscow he was called home by the news of his father's death. Passing through Finland, in whose principal towns he made his appearance, and Stockholm, where he was heard five times, he returned to Christiania in July, 1838. He was received by his countrymen with the enthusiasm and distinction to which he was entitled by the glory he had won for his native land. He did not remain long at home, but started on a new artist's journey, giving concerts in Denmark, in several cities of Germany, in Bohemia, Vienna, Paris, England, and Russia. In 1841, he took up his residence with his family at Valestrand, a paternal country-seat near Bergen, remaining there until the following summer, when he moved to Christiania, whence in 1842-1843 he made short musical tours to Denmark, Sweden, and Germany. From 1844 to 1846, he played in America, where, owing to his eccentricities as an artist, to which he there gave full rein, he reaped gold and laurels in abundance. Thence he proceeded to Paris, where, after the revolution of February, 1848, he gave a concert for the benefit of the wounded, and the same year he returned through Belgium to Norway. Here he gave many concerts under storms of applause, and in 1849, took under his protection the well-known Thorgeir Audunssón (the miller-boy), whom he assisted so far that he was able to give concerts in several towns.

At that time a new national life was unfolding through the presence among us of such artists as Tidemand, Gude and others, driven home by the disturbances abroad. The strong influence which our people in their daily lives and the colony of artists now settled among them exerted on each other, called forth an inspiration, which marks an era in the history of our art and literature, and it is no more to be wondered at that Ole Bull was affected by this revival, than that a man with his energy and world-wide reputation was compelled to find listeners to his ideas.

He had now become a wealthy man, and he wished to devote part of his fortune to the establishment of a Norwegian theatre. This plan he carried out in his native town of Bergen, where a national theatre was opened on the second of January, 1850, and called into existence such actors as Johannes Brun, Fru Brun, Fru Wolff and others.

He spent large sums of money on this enterprise, but fell into disputes with the authorities on the employment of the funds, for of course he had not the capacity for occupying himself with the details of such an institution, and consequently it soon found its way into other hands, but existed! And it cannot be denied that Ole Bull, by his energetic, patriotic grasp, laid the corner-stone of the national edifice we are now raising; for in the theatre of Bergen lay the germ, and thence proceeded the impulse to what has been accomplished in other respects for national dramatic art. Therefore Ole Bull's name will always be associated with the history of our theatre, and

take its place among the most prominent names; for although his theatre was closed in the course of a few years, it lived in a new form in Christiania, and is now reopened in Bergen, where, however, they cling so strongly to all Danish traditions — spite of much external Norwegianism — that the very question of a national theatre becomes doubtful just where dramatic talent and other necessary conditions are most readily found.

After placing his theatre in other hands, Bull made a short professional journey to Denmark and Germany, after which, in 1852, he started for America, where he hoped to found a distinctly Norwegian colony ("Oleana"). He purchased in Pennsylvania a large lot of land, of a man who did not own it, and as the business turned out unfortunately in other respects, he lost in it nearly all his fortune. In 1857 he returned to Norway.

In 1860 he again started on professional journeys to Sweden and Russia. In 1863 he labored, but without success, for the establishment of a Norwegian Academy of Music in Christiania. A couple of years later, after the death of his wife, he again went to America, and from this time made his home there, returning to spend the summers in his native land, where he owned a beautiful villa on Lysøen, near Bergen. A few years ago he married an American lady, Sara Thorpe.

As an artist, Ole Bull bore the stamp of his time, an era of virtuosi. Then all that was ingenious, piquant and eccentric, combined with melting harmony, was in high favor, and called forth a special execution. Taking this into consideration, Bull was the foremost of his time, and one could not but be carried away by his indisputable genius. But with the progress that has been made, other qualifications are now demanded. Paganini would certainly no longer awaken the same astonishment as when he was at the zenith of his fame. Execution has won still greater triumphs since those days, and such men as Joachim, Laub, Wilhelmj, Wieniawski and Sarasate are also in that respect the exponents of a far higher school of art than the Paganini, to which Ole Bull belongs. As regards Bull, perhaps the foundation of his art rested a little too much on self-instruction. In other respects, too, the times have changed. We demand now a deep insight into the thoughts of the composer, rather than a brilliant exhibition of individual genius. Ole Bull's repertoire was therefore quite different from that of the modern virtuoso. He played, for the most part, such pieces of his own and others as gave opportunity for a sort of instrumental fireworks, composed of enticing and bizarre conceits.

This the critic must say in the interests of truth and justice; but let us not forget that the artist too is "enfant de son siècle." If we keep this in mind, as well as the undreamed-of life to which his violin awakened Norwegian airs for us, and the brilliant genius with which it gave utterance to his virtues and his faults, our nation will always have a right to reckon him among its great men, among those richly-endowed natures who have shed a lustre on their native land.

His own compositions — apart from the few delicious airs we owe to his rich imagination — must for the most part be regarded as a sort of pot-pourri, freely treated. Bull was neither adapted by nature, nor theoretically educated to be a composer in the proper sense. His most important pieces are, "Norges Fjelde," "Concerto in A-major," "Polacca Guerriera," and "The Tarentella." His study of the construction of the violin is well worth attention. Such men as Vuillaume listened to his opinions with profound interest, though they could not always find a place in the system of the practical instrument-maker; but it will surprise us if his idea for a new pianoforte, whose principles undoubtedly rest on the primary laws of acoustics, does not sometime win acknowl-

edgment, though it may be carried out in another and better form than proposed by him.

Taken all in all, Ole Bull was a remarkably gifted man, an original and talented nature, with sun-spots, it may be, but likewise rays of dazzling brightness. Like many of his countrymen, he was too apt to rush heedlessly on, relying on "Providence" and his own genius to keep him up, and perhaps with too little faith in the great power of training in art; but this genius was really so rich, that it bore him up many a time when others would have been lost without the guidance of discipline.

One thing is certain; at the news of his death, only the picture of the brilliant and patriotic artist, always so zealous for the honor and reputation of Norway, stands before our minds, and a sympathetic chord is struck, wherever Norwegians are found. With all critical reservations, we cannot deny that Ole Bull's name and personality had grown together with our national consciousness.

Nor can we close these lines without expressing our joy that he died in his own land, and here his remains are laid.

On the last day of his life, as he opened his eyes in the morning, he stretched out his hands to heaven, exclaiming, "Min Gud, jeg takker dig!" ("My God, I thank Thee!") A short time after, when the physician informed him that his end was near, he took an affectionate farewell of those around him. They describe him as calm and composed in mind, although not quite without hope of recovery. He smiled to them as he looked at the roses and the heather in blossom, which they constantly brought him. As he felt death approaching, he expressed a wish to hear Mozart's Requiem, and listened with folded hands, while his wife played it through several times. As the notes died away, the change came over him which announces final dissolution. Ole Bull breathed his last on the 17th of August, at noon. On the 23d, he was buried in Bergen.

At seven o'clock in the morning, Ole Bull's family friends and other guests, among whom were the Governor of the district, the Burgomaster, etc., proceeded to Lysø, on the steamer "Kong Sverre." In the concert-hall, the rector of Fane and others, addressed their last thanks and farewell to the deceased, a simple and affecting ceremony. The casket, covered with flowers, among which lay a violin made of flowers and moss, by ladies of Bergen, was carried on board by peasants. The composer, Edward Grieg, bore the gold crown from San Francisco, and Dr. Danielsen the orders of the deceased. At "Krarven" the "Kong Sverre" was met by fourteen steamers, which escorted it in two lines to Molo. A salute was given from the steamers and fortress. At Nordnæs Point, a grand procession of five thousand persons awaited them. At two o'clock in the afternoon, the steamer stopped at Holbergs Bridge, and, under minute-shots from the fortifications, the funeral cortège passed by the Svane apothecary-shop, Ole Bull's birthplace, which was magnificently draped in mourning, down across the market-place, by the bridge, through King Oscar's Street, to the cemetery, where Rector Walnum conducted the funeral ceremonies. These were followed by a speech from Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, which we give below. Edward Grieg offered a laurel crown from Norwegian musicians, and Bendixen one from the National Theatre of Bergen. The weather was magnificent, and the procession of immense length. It was a solemn and affecting national fête, in which twenty thousand people joined. Flags draped with black were displayed over the whole bay and town. The people were all dressed in mourning, and steamers and boats by the hundred. The King sent a tele-

gram expressive of his grief to the widow of Ole Bull.

Ole Bull left to the Bergen Museum his orders, set in diamonds, a silver music-stand, which had once been presented to him by the students of Moscow, and a Hardanger fiddle, to which he had been much attached.

[A translation of Bjørnson's speech at Ole Bull's funeral will follow in next number.]

ABOUT OVERTURES.¹

[Concluded from page 196.]

Reference has hitherto been made to the overture, only as the introduction to an opera, oratorio or drama. The form and name have been, however, extensively applied during the present century to orchestral pieces intended merely for concert use, sometimes with no special purpose, in other instances bearing a specific title, indicating the composer's intention to illustrate some poetical or legendary subject. Formerly a symphony, or one movement therefrom, was entitled "Grand Overture," or "Overture" in the concert programme, according to whether the whole work or only a portion thereof was used. Thus, in the announcements of Salomon's London concerts (1791-4), Haydn's Symphonies, composed expressly for them, are generally so described. Among special examples of the overture, properly so called, composed for independent performance, are Beethoven's *Weihe des Hauses*, written for the inauguration of the Josephsstadt Theatre in 1822; Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream Overture* (intended at first for concert use only, and afterward supplemented by the exquisite stage music), and the same composer's *Hebrides*, *Calm Sea*² and *Prosperous Voyage*, and *Melusine*. These overtures of Mendelssohn's are, indeed, unparalleled in their kind. It is scarcely necessary here to comment on the wondrous Shakespearean prelude produced in the composer's boyhood, as a concert overture, and in after years associated with the charming incidental music to the drama, passages of the overture occurring in the final chorus of fairies, and thus giving unity to the whole; nor will musical readers require to be reminded of the rare poetic and dramatic imagination, or the exquisite skill by which the sombre romanticism of Scottish scenery, the contrasted suggestions of Goethe's poem, and the grace and passion of the Rhenish legend, are so happily illustrated in the other overtures referred to.

Schumann's overtures of this class—*Bride of Messina*, *Festiva Overture*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Hermann and Dorothea*—though all very interesting, are not very important; but in his *Overture to Manfred* he has left one work of the highest significance and power, which will always maintain its position in the first rank of orchestral music.³ As the prelude, not to an opera, but to the incidental music to Byron's tragedy, this composition does not exactly fall in with either of the classes we have given. It is, however, dramatic and romantic enough for any drama, and its second subject is a quotation from a passage which occurs in the piece itself.

Berlioz's overture *Les Francs Juges*, embodying the idea of the *Vehmgericht*, or secret tribunals of the Middle Ages, must not be omitted from our list, as a work of great length, great variety of ideas, and imposing effect.

The concert overtures of Sterndale Bennett belong to a similar high order of imaginative thought, as exemplified in the well-known overtures entitled *Parisina*, *The Naiads*, and *The Wood Nymph*, and that string of musical pearls,

¹From the article OVERTURE in Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians.

² *Becalmed at Sea* is what is meant.—ED.

³ But not a word about *Genovera*?—ED.

the *Fantasia* overture, illustrating passages from *Paradise and the Peri*. Benedict's overtures *Der Prinz von Homburg* and *Tempest*, Sullivan's *In Memoriam* (in the climax of which the organ is introduced), and *Di Ballo* (in dance rhythms), J. F. Barnett's *Overture Symphonique*, Cusins's *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*, Cowen's *Festiva Overture*, Gadsby's *Andromeda*, Pierson's *Faust* and *Romeo and Juliet*, and many more, are all independent concert overtures.

The term has also been applied to original pieces for keyed instruments. Thus we have Bach's overture in the French style; Handel's overture in the first set of his Harpsichord Suites, and Mozart's imitation thereof among his pianoforte works. Each of these is the opening piece of a series. Beethoven has prefixed the word "Overtura" to the quartet piece which originally formed the Finale to his B-flat quartet (op. 131), but is now numbered separately as op. 133; but whether the term is meant to apply to the whole piece, or only to the twenty-seven bars which introduce the fugue, we have nothing to guide us.

H. J. L.

IMPRESSIONS IN NEW YORK.

BOITO'S "MEFISTOFELE."—HERR HENSCHEL.—SARA BERNHARDT.—HOLMAN HUNT'S "SHADOW OF DEATH."

THE ISLAND, Dec. 10.

DEAR MR. DWIGHT:

The first production of Boito's opera "Mephistopheles" has been the most interesting event, so far, of the musical season in New York. It has proved attractive and successful, but not overwhelmingly so. A novelty was of course welcome amid the old and worn operatic repertoire, and the dramatic foundation—Goethe's "Faust"—of this novelty is a very popular one (in the high sense of popularity). But we may question whether Boito's manner of treating it has been such as to ensure lasting success for his work. It lacks the vital element of permanent success, originality. Originality, almost invariably a failure at first, almost as certainly succeeds at last. Boito's work was denounced, twelve years ago, at Milan, as "an innovation," and its author so discouraged that he half abandoned composition afterwards, having written (so far as we are aware), since that time, only one opera; had the judgment of his Milan critics been more liberal and enlightened, had they been able to discover in "Mephistopheles" talent endeavoring to free itself from the old-fashioned operatic traditions, but yet unconsciously entangled in the fetters of Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner, he might have felt encouraged to proceed on his career, and would have perhaps attained, ere now, to genuine originality.

In this work Boito has not aimed at dramatic unity or development; taking it for granted that every one knows the story of Faust, he has merely grouped together some salient points of the poem, and illustrates them by music, action, and spectacular display. The first part or prologue, Mephistopheles's wager with the Deity, is rather symphonic than dramatic, and has many fine points, though the orchestration is sometimes coarse. The music of the Easter Sunday scene is displeasing, noisy, trivial, with only a faint point of light in a rather pretty waltz. But even Auber has given the sense of the youth, freshness, out-door hopeful gaiety of Easter Sunday better in certain now hackneyed choruses of *Fra Diavolo*. The larghetto sung by Faust on returning to his laboratory is good in its large, expressive phrases; better still is the following aria in which Mephistopheles declares himself as a spiritual and intellectual Nihilist. But the

heart of the opera is to be found in the garden scene, fine from beginning to end, and rising to an ecstatic close. Again, in the Brocken scene, we have "highly intellectual music" (without heart, supernaturalness, awe-inspiring power). It is chiefly grotesque, though not without striking dramatic movements, as for instance, the sudden rush and prostration, and then the hush of the multitude before Mephistopheles. This scene offers many opportunities for spectacular display, but they are essentially theatrical, and not novel—the appearance of Margaret's fetch is exactly like that of the ghost of the mother of Max, in the *Freischütz*, and other effects are of the traditional ballet type. There is true music, again, in the prison scene, expressive and dramatic, with a lovely duet, softly murmured by the lovers, "Lontano, lontano," and the act is worked up to a fine climax. A soft, harmonious, illusive atmosphere, similar to that through which Corot enables us to behold his pictorial groups and scenes, breathes from the music of the fourth act; if not so lovely and serene as that of the Elysium illustrated by Gluck, it is still charming, and lovely are the flowing phrases sung by Helen and Pantalès. And yet, though this pleases our fancy, it touches us not; we feel too well that it is all but a dream. The epilogue, too, is wearisome; in spite of many fine points in it, we "assist" coldly at the struggle between good and evil beside the death-bed of Faust.

The opera is well presented on the whole. The central character is of course Mephistopheles, very well, if not ideally, represented by Novara; in Faust, Campanini was all that could be desired, but the part does not offer the same opportunities for dramatic passion as some of the characters he has become identified with, such as Lohengrin and Don José. The female characters are secondary in this opera; Margaret is a pretty, simple, pleasing, and ignorant peasant girl, a Margaret more true to the life, no doubt, than Gounod's ideal heroine; and Valleria was charming and altogether satisfactory in the part, which does not appear to call for the powers of a Nilsson, though Nilsson might invest it with a consequence it does not seem to possess. Miss Cary, too, was more than excellent as Martha and Pantalès. On the whole, the opera seems to have awakened two sets of impressions after a few hearings of it; one class of people says, "yes, it is very clever, yet rather wearisome, though showy; but it is cold, and, do you think it is music?" The second says, "Boito is not a prophet, but one of the most gifted followers of the modern school."

The other, and finer *Faust*, that of Berlioz, is renewing its tremendous success of last season, under the scholarly and enthusiastic leadership of Dr. Damrosch. The part of Mephistopheles having been found, on the first performance, unsuited [!] to Mr. Henschel, has been resumed by Mr. Remmertz, who so finely sustained it last year, with a fire and a power exceeding that displayed by him, perhaps, in anything else he has done. In his recitals, Mr. Henschel will doubtless justify the great reputation that preceded him, though he has not fulfilled expectation in his *Elijah* or Mephistopheles, perhaps only because expectation was too highly wrought. In *Elijah*, very finely performed by the Oratorio Society under Dr. Damrosch, Mr. Henschel proved himself a highly intelligent singer, a thorough musician; but his vocal method is deficient, and he lacks both mellow charm and rough power, of voice. Both power and charm are heard in Miss Drasdil's fine and well-trained organ, hence her success in the contralto music of *Elijah* was greater than that of Henschel in the part of the prophet. And yet, when we listen to Henschel, we feel how dependable, intel-

ligent, satisfactory he is, and that he does his conscientious best, which is very thorough workmanship. We wait for his *Lied* singing, to decide whether he possesses the power of touching, charming, transporting the listener.

Who shall dare to say that no one cares for art in New York? Immense audiences crowd to Mephistopheles, Berlioz's *Faust*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*; yet audiences as immense crowd to see and hear Mlle. Bernhardt, especially at her matinées, where ladies throng by hundreds and thousands, many to find no place at all, many satisfied to stand through the entire performance. She has proved at great success; a first a swift disappointment, at last, a slow surprise. A disappointment, because many people, unfamiliar with the progress of dramatic art in France during the past ten years, and uninterested in following up its manifestations, have not become acquainted, by report, with Mlle. Bernhardt's peculiar style of art, and have therefore expected something different—a grand, classic tragedienne, in the large, broad style; and she has since proved to these very people a gradual surprise, as they slowly learned to admire and to appreciate—not the qualities they expected, but different ones, which do not startle, but grow upon us. Grandeur, repose, the overwhelming emotion that springs from the depths of a noble heart, the elevated, imaginative power born of the fervor of a noble brain, the pathos of unconscious innocence, the impulse of unselfish feeling—these find no adequate representation in the art of Mlle. Bernhardt; hers is not outdoor, it is indoor feeling, passion, thought. But in the expression of this she is supreme, especially when it is displayed in such a character as that of Blanche de Chelles—as Lord Astley says: "One of those women, interesting products of our excessive civilization, who are born ripe, so to say; who, in consequence of erroneous education, are tired of life before they have lived, and for whom the forbidden fruit, even before they have tasted it, has no attraction, unless, indeed, it is made attractive by the addition of some extraordinary flavor."

For Mlle. Bernhardt, being, in herself, and in her art, unique, shows at her best in characters of a somewhat abnormal type, such as Blanche in *Le Sphinx*. On seeing her at first in such a part, one that is to a certain degree repulsive and unwomanly, because heartless, one instinct with feverish and morbid, not genuine, passion, we are apt to ascribe the limited effect of the character to the actress's limited powers, especially when the tragic end of Mme. de Chelles strikes us, not with pity and pathos, but only with horror; but after we have witnessed other impersonations, we render justice to her varied conception of characters alike in their type, and to the refined art, the absence of exaggeration that withholds Mlle. Bernhardt from introducing other colors into each of her performances than those that properly belong to each. She has pathos, passion, tenderness, but of a nature peculiar not only to the singular types of modern French life,—Frou-Frou, Camille, Mme. de Chelles,—which she best represents, but also apparently peculiar to herself. Within such a range of characters she is perfect; varied even in her mannerisms, natural in all that is abnormal, sparkling with vitality, truth itself in her delineation of what is, nevertheless, untrue. She is a complete representative of a certain type of womanhood, typical of the ideas and actions of an entire class of society, to be found, under modified conditions, not only in aristocratic French society, but in every country of the civilized world. Such characters are not original and expansive, they are individual and concentrated. And concentration and individuality are the qualities that most impress us in Mlle.

Bernhardt's acting. She pleases, she charms, she entertains, she thrills us, and she fascinates; but she cannot profoundly touch or attract, absorb or overwhelm us.

She is very pretty on the stage; more so than we had been led to expect. Does the subtle Sarah, with fine coquetry, cause the accounts of her thinness and plainness to be spread abroad, in order the more pleasantly to surprise those who see her for the first time? Miss Cushman is reported to have said that she was spared one of the greatest obstacles to success, one of the greatest trials that ever befall an actress—beauty. Mlle. Bernhardt, no doubt something of a cynic, doubtless understands that enthusiastic laudation of an actress's beauty lays her open to the danger of making at least half her own sex her enemies before they see her. In movement, gesture, attitude, she is all grace,—supple, natural; and although her toilets are rich to an extreme, her refined and delicate taste, her artistic temperament may be traced even in their slightest details. I have not seen her yet in the romantic and classic dramas of her repertoire: Adrienne, Hernani, Phèdre. Can she satisfactorily render the large, the generous passions? Hers is intensity; not breadth, depth, height; still less does she embody romance and ideal poesy, though she is ideal in her way.

The same elements of prettiness, grace, fineness, limited harmony, may be traced in her pictures, as in her acting; but these are rather the work of a highly accomplished amateur than of an artist forced to express her nature in this branch of art by irresistible vocation. Her sculpture displays more power. The bust of Emile de Girardin is ruthlessly life-like; a head of a young girl, with a foulard tied over the brows, charming; the "Ophelia" is largely modelled, full of poetry in conception; and she has displayed a grotesque and brave spirit of irony and finesse in the bronze inkstand, surmounted by her own bust, from the shoulders of which fantastic, demoniac wings start, while she has tipped her fingers with griffins' claws. In all Mlle. Bernhardt's female heads a likeness to herself, more or less pronounced, may be traced; indeed, one or two of these pictures resemble her more than her photographs, which do not render her justice. The likeness is doubtless involuntary. Every painter insensibly reproduces the type of his own race, or that of people about him, even in his delineations of foreign types.

From Sarah Bernhardt's "Griffon" to Holman Hunt's "Shadow of Death," is a long step up; yet here we detect the same peculiarity. Every race looks out of its eyes in a manner that belongs to itself, and Hunt's Christ, in this picture, looks out of his eyes, not as an Oriental, but as an Englishman does; and this in spite of the fact that Hunt sought a model for years in the East, before he found one to satisfy him. This picture has been very severely criticized here; was that the reason why I was agreeably disappointed in it? Yet I am not an admirer of Hunt. But I am sure that many, while blaming the excess of detail, wonderfully painted, though inharmonious, have nevertheless been carried away by that, to such an extent that they have overlooked or become blind to the purpose and very soul of the picture, the touching pathos and ideality of the face, which renders the shadow of the cross a secondary effect, and ennobles such pictorial trickery in that as may be displeasing to a fastidious taste. FANNY RAYMOND RITTER.

LEIPSIC.—The date of the fifth Gewandhaus Concert coincided with the anniversary of Mendelssohn's death, and the programme was devoted entirely to works from his pen. They were Psalm 98, Symphony in A-major, hymn for soprano, chorus, and orchestra, overture to *La Belle Mélusine*, "Ave

Maria," and fragments from the unfinished opera of *Loreley*. At the sixth concert Herr Leschetizky, the pianist, performed Saint-Saëns's Concerto in C-minor; Ballad in A-flat major (Chopin); Gavotte and Variations (Rameau). The instrumental pieces were Cherubini's overture to *Anacreon*; symphony (No. 4, B-flat major) and the third *Leonore* overture (Beethoven).

Dwight's Journal of Music.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1880.

ANOTHER YEAR! The present number completes the Fortieth Volume and the twenty-ninth year of this most long-lived of the many musical journals of America. A Title-Page and Index for the past two volumes (to be bound in one) will be furnished in a few weeks.

Vol. XLI will begin with the number for January 1, 1881; and now is the time for the renewal of the annual subscriptions, and for the coming in of new subscribers, of whom we hope there will be many. Our Journal needs them,—always needed them; for, in spite of all that has always been said in its praise, in spite of the splendid "testimonial" just tendered to its editor, so warmly and so widely, this journal never yet has been remunerative. The recognition and reward came last week in another shape, one unmistakably heartfelt, and most generous, most beautiful, most gratifying; it was well worth waiting for! But may we not regard it also as a token of renewed interest in the old DWIGHT'S JOURNAL OF MUSIC,—the promise of a wider rally of appreciative friends to its support, and its improvement, through the humdrum cheaper way of regular annual subscription, as well as advertising patronage? Double its subscription list, and you increase its advertising columns, and then there will be no need of "testimonials" except in the harmless way of compliment and flattering approval.

THE TESTIMONIAL CONCERT.

In timely aid of the above New Year's announcement, comes this unexpected, to us almost overwhelming endorsement of our Journal and our well-meant, if not always wise or efficient, labors in behalf of music, on the part of a committee of citizens which we have already characterized as "largely representative of the best elements of the musical profession, of the best and wisest friends of music, as well as of the honored names of dear old Boston." And their appeal was instantly and heartily responded to on all sides. Greetings and warmest signs of recognition, kindest notes of sympathy (often from most unexpected quarters), prompt, enthusiastic offers of musical service in any concert that might be arranged, poured in upon the Editor, who all at once found himself the object of unusual attention, and in danger of developing (but that he is too old for that) a most enormous egotism. Hand and heart were offered wherever he met an old acquaintance; everybody seemed full of the bright idea that had struck somebody just "in the nick of time." We never knew we had so many friends; and some, whom we had supposed, if not

to be our enemies, yet to look askance upon our labors, suddenly threw off the disguise and shone among the foremost and the friendliest, who through the press, as well as by voice and pen in private, created an interest in others, and helped to organize the plan so beautifully realized on Thursday of last week. It gave us a better opinion of human nature,—not that we ever entertained a very poor one; we never did, and never can, base our feeling of the worth and the significance of music, as a certain great musical "reformer" does in his essay on Beethoven, upon the theories of a pessimistic metaphysician.

For such a testimonial, so sincere and hearty in the inception, so admirably prepared, with such consummate tact and delicacy, so beautiful, resplendent in the full flower, the concert, and so fraught with solid tokens of esteem and friendship, we can hardly trust ourself to find fit words of thanks. We accept it both with pride and with humility, for it is a formidable thought to us that we seem now more than ever bound to go on trying (perhaps in vain) to perform any service that shall in any degree vindicate the faith which hosts of friends have in this touching way reposed in us.

But leaving all we wished to say to be imagined, as it readily will be in a musical and social atmosphere so sympathetic as this in which we just now have the happiness to live and move and have our being (although it seems like passive dreaming), let us come at once to the concert itself, which was in every way a signal, memorable success, and which we flatter ourself we could and did appreciate about as keenly as any other man or woman in that great and really distinguished audience. Both programme and performance were of so exceptionally fine a character as to claim special mention among the many good things we have heard, or shall hear this winter. Never was a finer programme, either intrinsically or in its fitness for the occasion, presented in Boston; never a more conscientious *con amore* rendering; seldom one with finer means, and all by artists who had kindly, eagerly offered their coöperation freely, including the orchestra of the Harvard Symphony Concerts, with Mr. Carl Zerrahn, conductor, and Mr. Bernhard Listemann, violin leader, besides a small army of our best vocalists, pianists, violinists,—more than could possibly find place in a single concert, making the task of the programme committee a delicate one indeed. Here is the programme in full, for it is worth preserving:—

Fifth Symphony, in C-minor, Op. 67, Beethoven
Allegro, Andante, Scherzo and Finale (Triumphal March).

Twenty-Third Psalm, "The Lord is My Shepherd," Schubert

Four-part chorus for female voices.
Sung by a volunteer choir, including members of the
"Boylston" and "Cecilia" Clubs.

Under the direction of Mr. George L. Osgood.
Concerto in C, for three pianos, with string orchestra,
J. S. Bach

Allegro, Adagio, Fugue.
Messrs. J. C. D. Parker, Arthur Foote and John A.
Preston.

Concert-Stueck, in G, for piano and orchestra, Op. 32,
Schumann

Introduction, and Allegro Appassionato.
Mr. B. J. Lang.

Quartet (Canon), from "Fidelio," Beethoven
Mrs. H. M. Rogers, Miss Edith Abell, Mr. Charles
R. Adams and Mr. John F. Winch.

Overture: "Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt," Mendelssohn
Illustrating Goethe's poem: 1. "Becalmed at Sea";
2. "A Breeze and a Prosperous Voyage."

What so fit for the occasion, what so worthy, as the glorious old Fifth Symphony?—as glori-

ous now, and full of meaning in the musical history of Boston, as it was in the year of its first performances in the old Academy concerts given in the Odeon (Federal Street theatre) in 1841. To the present writer it gave as it were the keynote—rather say the "normal pitch"—to his whole musical life. Of musical Art in Boston, it will ever stand the corner-stone, though *The Messiah* and the old Oratorio Society laid the earlier foundations. To us, and to many in the Music Hall, it had a deep significance, for never was a higher standard set than that had set for all of us from the first day of our interest in great orchestral music. How we all waited for the four opening notes, the pregnant *notice!* and how all the old miracle revived with a new charm and freshness as the work once more developed! Never did that symphony ring out more inspiringly, more full of meaning. The great life-struggle typified in the Allegro; the heavenly encouragement and exhortation of the wonderful Andante; the nerving of the heroic, restless soul for action, with the superhuman effort of the double basses, in the Scherzo; and finally the broad, sublime triumphal march,—grandest march ever written or conceived,—a march as of ranks of solar systems sweeping in vast majestic circles round the inmost central Sun invisible!—all was played *rom Herzen aus*, as if every member of the band felt it, meant it. You noted that cadenza for the oboe played so charmingly by Mr. de Ribas, in the middle of the first movement: did it not sound precisely as it did when he played it the first time in 1841, and as he has played it ever since? Yes, the fifth Symphony was indispensable and all-rewarding in that concert.

Then—what more fit again?—that chorus of sweet, fresh, flexible, pure angel voices, singing of trust in the Lord! When have we heard a female chorus sung more exquisitely than that was by fifty ladies of the Cecilia and Boylston Clubs, reinforced by many of our best solo singers? Then, in that Concerto for three pianos, the cheering and invigorating influence, the strong handshake as it were, of old Sebastian Bach, the healthy, hearty, genial, pious, profound master of masters in the tone-art, who, every time we hear him, seems to hold the whole history and world of music in the hollow of his hand! Thanks for that selection, and for the zeal and the effect with which it was interpreted! Thanks, too, for the exquisite, the delicately imaginative, poetic concert piece of Schumann, in which Mr. Lang seemed at his best. (And thanks for other contributions of the same fine order warmly offered, but not found practicable in the programme!)

Then the wonderful Quartet (in canon) from *Fidelio*, by which the audience were so carried away that it had to be repeated. It may be easily imagined that the opening words: "Mir ist's so wunderbar!" chimed fully with the feeling of the wondering chief listener on that occasion; he will not soon outlive the wonderment of the whole situation in which that testimonial placed him.

Finally, for the parting God-speed, that overture of Mendelssohn which so graphically illustrates the two contrasted scenes of Goethe's little poem (also set by Beethoven for voices): 1. A dead calm in mid ocean,—no breath, no motion.—weary, helpless, almost hopeless; 2. the springing up of a breeze, the boatswain's whistle (flute), the swinging round of the great sails, and away the good ship bounds, until she comes in triumph into port with flying colors and salute of guns and trumpets. Surely the allusion there was understood, for the orchestra played it splendidly and with enthusiasm.

Now, was not that a concert to be remembered all one's life? Handel said that, while compos-

ing the *Messiah*, he "knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body." We may not say so much; but we can say, that when the thought came over us: "Why! all this is for us!" we could hardly tell whether it were real or a dream. And now reserving special thanks to all and several, who have been so philanthropically moved to cheer our path fast nearing to its end, we must conclude this long-winded acknowledgment, to save a little room for notice due to other concerts and to other matters.

CONCERT REVIEW.

A few brief notes upon the concerts of the past three weeks is all we can afford in our contracted space. And first the concerts of the

APOLLO CLUB, Music Hall, Nov. 26 and 29. We never heard those seventy men sing better; and we were struck by the remarkable preservation of their voices, many of them being original members, veterans in the service. Rich, sweet, manly quality of tone, large, generous volume, admirably blending of the voices in a grand organ-like ensemble, combined with rare unity, precision, light and shade in producing a fine impression. The selections were comparatively short pieces. Gernsheim's "Salamis" for baritone solo (Dr. Bullard) and chorus, has something of the solemnity and classic dignity of Mendelssohn's choruses to the *Antigone*, etc. The harmony is full and strong, and the work grows fervid and interesting as it goes on. Rheinberger's Roundelay: "Awake, ye lords and ladies gay!" is a rich and dainty piece of coloring, full of life and charm.

This was followed by a Serenade by Widor, for a peculiar combination of instruments: piano (Mr. Arthur Foote), violin (Mr. C. N. Allen), cello (Mr. Wulf Fries), flute (Mr. Rietzel), and organ-harmonium (Mr. S. B. Whitney). It is a light, fresh, delicate and graceful work, not without poetic charm, and the effect was unique and pleasing:—a nice sort of music, we should think, for fairs and floral festivals. A Serenade by Tours, with baritone solo (finely sung by Mr. J. F. Winch); Horsley's "By Celia's arbor," beautifully rendered by Mr. Want, Mr. Allen A. Brown, Dr. Bullard, and Mr. Aiken; and Sullivan's "The Beleaguered," a brilliant, vigorous chorus in march rhythm, filled out the first part agreeably.

Part second contained Dudley Buck's setting of Longfellow's "Nun of Nidaros," for tenor solo (Mr. Want) and chorus, with accompaniment of piano and harmonium; "The Young Lover," by Koschat, which was encored; Handel's Polyphemus Song: "O ruddier than the cherry," superbly sung by Mr. John Winch, with masterly accompaniment by the conductor of the Apollo, Mr. B. J. Lang; a couple of cello solos played by Mr. Fries (Nocturne, by Lachner, and Gavotte, by Popper); and, for a popular finale, the "Champagne" part-song by Schroeter. — The usual repetition of this programme, with change of instrumental pieces, a few evenings later, we did not hear.

The next Apollo concerts are announced far ahead,—the 4th and 9th of February. Max Bruch's "Frithjof," for soprano and baritone solos, male chorus, and orchestra, will then be given entire for the first time in Boston.

—Nov. 30. Mr. LANG gave his third presentation of the *Damnation de Faust*, this time at the Tremont Temple; and it must be admitted that all the details of the music, all its greatest and its least effects, came out with a remarkable distinctness, and with satisfactory intensity of sound. It was an even better rendering, under, in some sense, better acoustical conditions, than the two before. The work, with all its strangeness, has certainly grown popular. Even its most diabolical suggestions and infernal pictures such as "the Ride to Hell," are far less bizarre, do far less violence to all sense of beauty and of harmony, than the atrocious finale to the same morbid, madcap composer's *Symphonie Fantastique*. And it has romantic beauties of a very high order and originality. The choruses, both male and female, were most beautifully rendered; even

the rollicking refrains of soldiers and of students, so difficult in their combination, were successfully given. Miss Lilian Bailey again sang the part of Marguerite with her wonted purity and truth and tenderness of voice and feeling. Herr Henschel confirmed the first fine impression of his characteristic, intellectual, subtle and dramatic rendering of the rôle of Mephistopheles. If his voice, in the lower range, is not altogether pleasing, nor of great weight and power, that is made up for by the fine imaginative conception, and the certainty of power with which he enters into the spirit of the part, and by his admirably artistic style and execution. He was enthusiastically encored after the Serenade. The tenor part of Faust was this time entrusted to Mr. Julius Jordan, to whom we listened with great satisfaction throughout. He is a very intelligent and conscientious singer; evidently understands himself, his means and his task perfectly; and, if his voice is not remarkable for beauty or for power, it is nevertheless a good voice, always kept well in hand, and equal to the work. He sustained himself with no flaw or flagging to the end, and he is plainly one of those reliable and useful tenors whom it would be a gain for us to have here. Mr. Hay was again successful in the one thankless little song of Brander (the "Rat"). The orchestra was remarkably complete and satisfactory, from violins, oboes and bassoons, to cymbals, gong, and all the kitchen utensils. The Racoczkzy March created a furore.

Now, appropos of the *Damnation*, we are tempted to insert just here, for better or for worse, and open to approval or protest from any one, the following letter which we have received:

MR. EDITOR: The recent production and favorable reception in this city of a certain work of Hector Berlioz, in which that writer, by means of a hotel gong and other unmusical instruments, seems to attempt to sever music from its traditional sphere of the emotions and couple it with that of the nerves, leads one to inquire in what direction modern musical taste is drifting. Of course, we look to the programmes of our miscellaneous concerts for the true index of feeling on this subject. Of these programmes I have before me that of the Second Symphony Concert of the Harvard Musical Association; one as severe in its character as any we see. It consists of five numbers: the first by Haydn, the next three by Liszt, Saint-Saëns, and Chopin; the last going back far enough to include the name of Weber. Turning to the programmes of our piano recitals, we find them headed by something of Mendelssohn's (possibly a Beethoven sonata) and the rest all Rubinstein, Liszt, Gade, etc., etc. The same plan holds true especially in our Chamber concerts; the sentiment of all seeming to be to apologize, by means of something from an eighteenth century composer, for a string of things by composers, most of whom are living. Not that the new things are not, some of them, very good indeed; but in the rage for the latest novelty, some very indifferent things creep in.

I asked, the other day, one of our most prominent pianists and musicians, why Haydn and Mozart are never played in public by our pianists; to which he replied, that they only wrote for a piano with five octaves; as if anything written in that compass was not worthy to be played; or, as if the octave at each extremity of the keyboard of our modern pianoforte contained the essential notes of a good composition for that instrument. Might we not as well discard Bach's organ music because his instrument might not have had a vox-humana stop, or a crescendo pedal?

I am not one of those who would continually advocate "the old masters," to the exclusion of our modern composers, from whose pens we certainly have an immense amount of remarkable, and a considerable amount of good music; still there are a great many old things that would be new to a Boston audience; and until these are exhausted, why act as if the newest in point of years must be the youngest in all respects?

With an apology for the hasty way in which these thoughts are expressed, but with no apology (if you please) for the thoughts themselves, I remain,

Very Truly,

GEO. C. COLLINS.

MEDFORD, MASS., Nov. 30.

—EUTERPE, Dec. 1. The first Chamber Concert of the third season was given in the new Meissonon (Tremont Temple), before a large, appreciative and sociable looking audience; for the seats were disposed in hollow square, the platform in the middle. It all looked genial and cosy; and the hall proved very good for sound, although there was some sense of roughness in strong violin passages, which may have been partly owing to the too frank and unsparing acoustics of walls still fresh and crude. The programme consisted of two string quartets: the fine one in E-flat, (No. 1) by Cherubini, which was played last season, with its larghetto and most interesting varia-

tions; and the one in E-minor (Op. 44, No. 2), by Mendelssohn, composed in 1837, which has all the Mendelssohnian elements, especially the fairy vein, and to the beauties of which the modern ears of the majority appeared more keenly sensitive than to the work of Cherubini. The interpreters were the Listemann Quartet, consisting of Bernhard and Fritz Listemann, John Mullaly and Alexander Heindl,—all superior artists. — Next time (January 5) the Beethoven Club will take its turn, when an original quartet (No. 2) by Mr. Chadwick will get its first hearing here, to be followed by the Posthumous Quartet in D-minor, by Schubert.

—The Tribute to WULF FRIES, suggested and arranged by a number of the most musical ladies of Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, etc., in whose families this favorite artist had been for years esteemed and loved as teacher and companion in the parlor practice of classical trio and sonata music, took the form of a beautiful Chamber Concert at Horticultural Hall, on Saturday evening, Dec. 4. The audience was very large and sympathetic, the programme very rich and choice, and the interpretation excellent throughout, for all the artists took part with the heartiest good will. It was a genial, cheerful, beautiful and sweet occasion,—yet with one shadow cast upon it by the absence and the mortal illness of one of the ladies who was first inspired with the idea of such a tribute, and whose whole heart was in the work,—a bright spirit, full of musical enthusiasm, and one of the finest amateur pianists in our city, whose death occurred, sad loss to music and to hosts of friends, upon the very day of that other "testimonial,"—a shadow felt, too, even there! — We can only place the programme here on record; the Quartet and Quintet were performed by the Beethoven Club, (Messrs. Allen, Dannreuther, Heindl, and Wulf Fries):—

Quartet, No. 1, in E-flat, Cherubini
Song—"The Message," Blumenthal
Mr. W. J. Winch.

Variations for two Pianos (Op. 35) on the Minuet from the Beethoven Sonata, Op. 31, No. 3. St. Saëns
Mr. Lang and Mr. Foote.

Songs, with Violin Obligato, Op. 10, Oscar Weil
{ a. Autumn,
{ b. Spring.
Mrs. Allen.

Concerto for 'Cello, Op. 7, Svendsen
Allegro—Andante—Finale,
Mr. Wulf Fries.

Duet—"Oh Flower of the Verdant Lea," from the Cantata of Rebecca, Barnby
Mrs. Allen and Mr. Winch.

Quintet, for Piano and Strings, Op. 44, Schumann

—Here we must pause, leaving two Harvard Symphony concerts, two of the Philharmonic, one of the Cecilia, etc., for future notice. Fortunately, Christmas comes, and there will be a week or two of clear field not much competed for by concert-givers, so that we can turn our thoughts to things past, undisturbed by the rush of new things passing.

—One event, however, will be the annual performance of *The Messiah*, by the Handel and Haydn Society, on Sunday evening, Dec. 26. The solos will be sung by Mrs. H. M. Knowles, soprano; Miss Drasdil, contralto; Mr. W. C. Tower, tenor; and Mr. George Henschel, baritone.

MUSICAL CORRESPONDENCE.

BALTIMORE, NOV. 29. The concert season at the Peabody Conservatory has opened with the so-called students' concerts, that is, concerts of chamber music given every Saturday evening as part of the course of instruction for students of the conservatory. Thus far four of these concerts have taken place, and the programmes have included the following works:

String-Quartet, D-major, No. 21, Mozart
Serenade, D-major, work 8, for violin, viola and 'cello, Beethoven
Piano Trio, C-minor, No. 2, work 66, Mendelssohn
String-Quartet, E-minor, work 47, No. 1, Rubinstein
Piano-Quartet, E-flat, work 47, R. Schumann
String-Quartet, A minor, work 1, Svendsen
Suite, A-minor, work 68, for violin and piano,
J. P. E. Hartmann

Also, some songs by Schubert, Liszt and Wagner. The string-quartet is composed, as last year, of Messrs. Allen, Fincke, Schaefer, and Jungnickel.

The number of symphony concerts has not yet been

definitely decided on; but the prospects are very bright for at least five concerts during the winter. Mr. Asger Hamerik, the director, is engaged on the finale of his first symphony, which, however, will probably not be performed here until next season.

In the way of vocal instruction, there is quite a novelty to chronicle in the opening last month, by Prof. Fritz Fincke, of the Peabody Conservatory, of a private school for the training of young female voices, from the ages of 7 to 16 years, principally for the purpose of obtaining good material for future choruses. The general plan for instruction is proposed to be as follows:

1. Careful directions as to the correct use of the voice, and especially the artistic treatment of the much abused head-voice; solo and chorus singing.
2. Exercises for the ear, and in connection therewith lessons in intervals and chords, as also systematic practice in time-keeping.
3. Instruction in the history of music in order to encourage thought on musical topics. Biographical sketches of the most important authorities, and explanations of the different musical styles, by means of practical illustrations.

The idea is a novel one for Baltimore, and the beneficial influences which such an undertaking, if continued in the proper spirit, must in time exert, are certainly sufficient to commend it to all friends of vocal culture in general, and of good chorus music in particular. Moreover, it is always a matter of satisfaction to find an earnest laborer in the fields of art, with objects above and beyond the expectation of immediate returns for his efforts, sowing where others besides himself may reap. From the very outset, I am happy to say, the school has met with every encouragement.

Of the choral works practised in our city at present, the only ones deserving special attention are *Judas Maccabeus* and *Elijah*.

CHICAGO, Dec. 10. Our musical season may now be announced as fairly begun, for we have had two important concerts by the Apollo Club, a number of representations of English Opera by the Strakosch and Hess Company, and no end of small entertainments. On Monday evening the Apollo Club gave Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, and the *Spring and Summer* of Haydn's *Seasons*. The solos were given by Miss Fannie Kellogg, Mr. M. W. Whitney, Mr. Fritch, and Dr. C. T. Barnes. I only heard *Acis and Galatea*, as I was called to the opera during the remainder of the evening. The work may only be said to have been fairly performed, for there were many drawbacks. Tuesday the Club gave another concert, bringing out Rubinstein's "Tower of Babel," for the first time in this country, Mr. Whitney, Mr. Fritch, and Mr. McWade taking the solo parts. The orchestra numbered forty men, the chorus one hundred and fifty, and there was the added aid of the organ. Any musician, who has studied the full score, would at once be forced to admit that, for a complete performance, the force we had engaged was inadequate. A double, and even treble chorus is required, while the orchestral demands are very great, and the solo numbers must be in very safe hands to enable the work to be fairly heard. It will be remembered that Mr. Thomas intended to produce this work at the last Festival at Cincinnati, but for some reason it was not given. I followed the work very carefully, score in hand, and endeavored to see its full possibilities. When it is entrusted to a larger number of singers, and a more complete orchestra, I have no doubt that the work would impress one with a feeling of grandeur. The subject is hardly one to excite great interest, for modern research has rather unsettled many of the old stories, that were once held so sacred. Yet the dramatic element is not wanting, and the influence of the mysterious is supposedly present; and thus the composer has outlet for his musical fancy in at least two directions. The influence of modern composition, or the new school, is of course seen throughout the work. Every form of development tends to the gigantic in expression, and the full resources of vocal and instrumental aid are called into use.

In regard to the music, one must frankly admit that it is rich in coloring, even if novelty has an influence in it also. The solos for the tenor require a very powerful and high voice. Mr. Fritch was not able to sing them as written. In both his solos, where the high B-flat and the B-natural occur, he was obliged to alter his score. Yet it is better not to attempt and fail, even if the music is made to suffer by the innovation. Signor Campanini is doubtless the only tenor that could adequately sing these solos. The orchestral part of the

work is rich in contrasts, and the instrumentation of the scene in which the destruction of the Tower is represented is very expressive. A storm is pictured, but not of the commonplace order of rain and wind, with thunder and lightning, but rather as if some dread mystic power was making the elements do its will. There is a strangeness about it that electrifies, as well as novel. The double chorus, expressive of the wonder that God had done, in protecting Abraham from the flames of the furnace, is a very dramatic number, and it will always create interest when well sung. The part of Nimrod was entrusted to Mr. Whitney. There was hardly passion enough in his singing to make the rôle so dramatic as it should be made, although his noble voice was used with dignity, and his style of delivery was very good. The last number, or climax of the work, is a triple chorus, divided as follows:—a chorus of angels, a chorus of people, and a chorus of demons. There is a unity of idea, even if the elements of evil and of good are brought into action at the same time; for while the people and the angels are praising the Lord, the demons are proclaiming the power of Satan, and the thought of praise is common to both parts of the chorus. To give this number with that intensity that rightfully belongs to it, at least six hundred voices would seem necessary. The Apollo Club only attempted two of the choruses, for that portion belonging to the "demons" was left out. While we may not call the performance a very fine one, we may at least be thankful to the Club for giving us the opportunity to become somewhat acquainted with the work, and I am sure they deserve the praise of every musician for the honesty of their endeavor.

Monday evening, Mme. Marie Roze made her first appearance in English opera, as *Carmen*. She gave a very lady-like representation of the rôle, but was hardly the brilliant and bewitching *Carmen* that the opera calls for. She made her rôle as interesting as she could, however, for doubtless she has very little sympathy with it. Her support was very commonplace, and not worthy of her. She has also appeared as *Aida* during the week. Next week we shall have the *Elijah*, by the Beethoven Society, with Herr Henschel.

C. H. B.

NEW YORK, Dec. 13. On Thursday evening, Dec. 2, the New York Philharmonic Club gave its second concert at Chickering's, before a very intelligent and appreciative audience. The salient features of the programme were these:

String Quartet, F. Op. 59. Beethoven.
P. F. Quartet, B-flat. Saint-Saëns.
(Mr. Richard Hoffman.)

The performance was a good one, particularly in the work of Saint-Saëns, which was given with a precision and an *oploomb* most pleasurable. Owing to a new disposition of the instruments upon the stage, the effect was greatly enhanced. Heretofore the piano has been placed at the extreme right, with the strings occupying the centre of the platform; this is manifestly inconvenient, and even awkward for the pianist, who is really the leader, and has been compelled to throw his head over his shoulder in order to give the cue in making an "attack"; by the new plan every one can see every one else, and unity of action becomes not only possible, but almost certain. Mr. Hoffman is a most admirable artist—*cela va sans dire*—and his excellence and finish were never more clearly demonstrated than upon this occasion; he never overdid anything, and never attempts to force the piano into a position which it was not intended to occupy. He plays like the artist and the gentleman that he is; and that is certainly saying a great deal in these degenerate days of turbulence and boisterousness, which seem to be characteristic of modern pianism.

There were some vocal selections with regard to which a charitable critic would not wish to say anything; a club of this kind is sometimes "taken in," and as the infliction will never be repeated, let us suppose that the blot never existed. Mr. Mills will play at the next soiree, and at the fifth; Mr. Hoffman will appear at the fourth and sixth. An earnest lover of good music would be glad to see larger audiences.

It has long been the opinion of shrewd observers that Chamber Music will not "pay" in New York. Messrs. Arnold, Werner, and their associates, hold a contrary opinion; they are determined to make their concerts successful, both artistically and pecuniarily, and have resolved to "fight it out on this line if it takes" several winters. All success to them and their laudable efforts!

On Saturday evening, Dec. 4, the Symphony Society gave its second concert with Berlioz's *Damnation*.

The solos were taken by Mme. Valleria and Messrs. Henschel, Harvey and Bourne. At the risk of being considered a fossil or an antediluvian, I must say that the text—as furnished by the printed edition in use—is a trifle too broad for a refined audience; it would seem as if some way might have been contrived to avoid certain obnoxious phrases and expressions which displeased many who attended the concert.

Too much commendation could hardly be accorded to Dr. Damrosch, for his faithful and effective drilling of the orchestra and chorus; their work was well done. As for the soloists, Mme. Valleria acquitted herself well; Mr. Henschel did less with his part than had been expected and hoped; Mr. Bourne's part was too small to afford much chance for display, while Mr. Harvey was a trifle too stiff and cold—except in two or three instances—to impress the audience very favorably.

The *Damnation* will be given at the Academy of Music to-morrow (Tuesday) evening, with Mr. Remmert as Mephistopheles.

On Tuesday evening, Dec. 7, the season at the Metropolitan Hall came to a close, with Joseffy as a special attraction. It is stated that the "Winter season" will open in January with Thomas's orchestra; but it may be safely predicted that the project is a problematical one; thus far the Hall has not been quite so successful as could be wished, and—as I stated in a former letter—Mr. Thomas did not give the "boom" to the enterprise that had been evidently desired. At all events, the Spring season will probably open with Mr. Aronsden as conductor, and he will undoubtedly furnish a class of music that will please the large number of people who do not care for classical music, but who merely wish to be amused.

On the same Tuesday evening, Mr. Henschel gave the first of his series of vocal recitals at Steinway Hall. Mr. Henschel was at his best, and proved himself the reliable artist that we know him to be. Miss Bailey, who assisted him, has a very sweet, flexible voice of sympathetic quality, and while she can scarcely be termed a great singer, is yet possessed of a refined style and musical intelligence that are most satisfactory and pleasing. Mr. Henschel's second recital will occur on Tuesday, Jan. 4, 1881.

Mme. Constance Howard, a pianiste of ability, and persevering in her aim, has given two piano recitals recently, and merits commendation, more, possibly, for her promise than for her present excellence; she seems to possess the true artistic instinct, and her playing has many pleasant qualities.

On Wednesday evening, Dec. 8, the Frankos—a musical family—gave a pleasant concert at Steinway Hall; there were vocal solos, and solos for the piano, and for the violin; many of these were rendered intelligently and acceptably, and the young artists are to be congratulated upon their success.

On Saturday evening, Dec. 11, the Philharmonic Society gave its second concert, with this programme:

Overture, "Coriolanus." Beethoven
Symphony, N. 8 (unfinished) Schubert
Siegfried (Final Scene, Act 1) Wagner
"The Wedding of the Sword."
Siegfried, Mr. W. C. Tower.
Mime, Mr. Max Truemann.
A Faust Symphony, Liszt
Tenor Solo and Concluding Chorus.
(Liederkrantz, Beethoven, Maennerchor.)

Your Boston readers are doubtless familiar with Schubert's lovely fragmentary symphony, which is a very great favorite with New York audiences; it was well played—in the main—but exception must be taken to the scrupulous smothering of the contrabassos, which resulted in the almost entire inaudibility of the low pizzicato notes, upon which the effect of the second movement so greatly depends. The wind instruments, also, were not entirely in accord with the strings: it isn't pleasant to say these things, but somebody must tell the truth.

In the Siegfried selection, Mr. Thomas and the orchestra were emphatically at their best. The performance was admirable, and a very exhausting thing it must be for every one concerned. There is an impressive dignity, a grandeur about the grand sweep of the composition that holds one spell-bound until its conclusion; there is no "padding," nor is there a single ineffective note; everything has a purpose, and above all, there was no anti-climax. This number was the success of the evening.

Of Liszt's wild, incoherent symphony there is little to say. The prodigality of genuine orchestral effects is only equalled by the paucity of ideas and the triviality of the "Faust theme." It was well played, but is a most ungrateful thing to hear, except as a matter of musical geometry.

